

A Gift from Our Church **Fathers to the Christian** **World**

**Our Christian Modern
Understanding of the
Blessed Trinity**

As the Church Grew

- **Several hundred grew to millions**
- **Especially after the Edict of Milan, 313 AD**
- **Encompassed the Roman Empire speaking many different languages**
- **The “Fathers” of the Church were intensely concerned with preserving the unity and integrity of those who believed (core beliefs & values)**
- **“Now the company of those who believed were of one heart and soul” (Acts 4:32)**
- **“For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the Gospel” (1 Cor 4:15)**

Who Were the Church Fathers?

- **Early Christian “professors” (about 100)**
- **Especially revered in the Catholic Church and given a privileged place of doctrinal authority**
- **Generally, four accepted criteria**
 - **Orthodox doctrine**
 - **Holiness of life**
 - **Church approval**
 - **Antiquity**
- **The era of Church Fathers (Patristic Era) – end of the Apostolic Age (100 AD) to ~Nicaea II (787 AD)**

Consistency of Faith

The greatest Heresies denying the doctrine of God as Trinity

- **Gnosticism**: Denied the Trinity and Incarnation. All physical matter was evil including the human body
- **Sabellianism**: Complete denial of the Trinity. God the Father became man as Jesus Christ.
- **Arianism**: Most successful and powerful heresy. Played a crucial role in Church history and doctrine development. Arius taught, Jesus was not true God and not co-eternal with the Father
- **Nestorianism**: The divine and human Jesus were two distinct persons. Mary was not the Mother of God

The Great Christological Councils

- **Nicaea I (325)** Focused on Arianism, wrote the Nicene Creed
- **Constantinople I (381)** Residual controversies surrounding Arianism, reaffirmed the Trinity
- **Ephesus I (431)** Addressed the person and natures of Jesus. Mary as Theotokos (God-bearer), or Mother of God
- **Chalcedon (451)** Jesus is one person with two distinct natures (human and divine), residual Arianism, revised the Nicene Creed (re: Trinity)

The Bible Alone Doesn't Provide the Answers About Trinity

- **“Most Holy Trinity” is the central mystery of Christian faith and of Christian life (CCC 261)**
- **The Father is God, The Son is God, The Holy Spirit is God, yet there is only one true God**
- **The three are co-eternal and co-equal**
- **The three are uncreated and omnipotent**
- **Nowhere in Scripture are the Three Divine Names represented together as one true God**
- **180 AD “The Trinity of God (the Father), His Word, and His Wisdom” – Theophilus of Antioch**

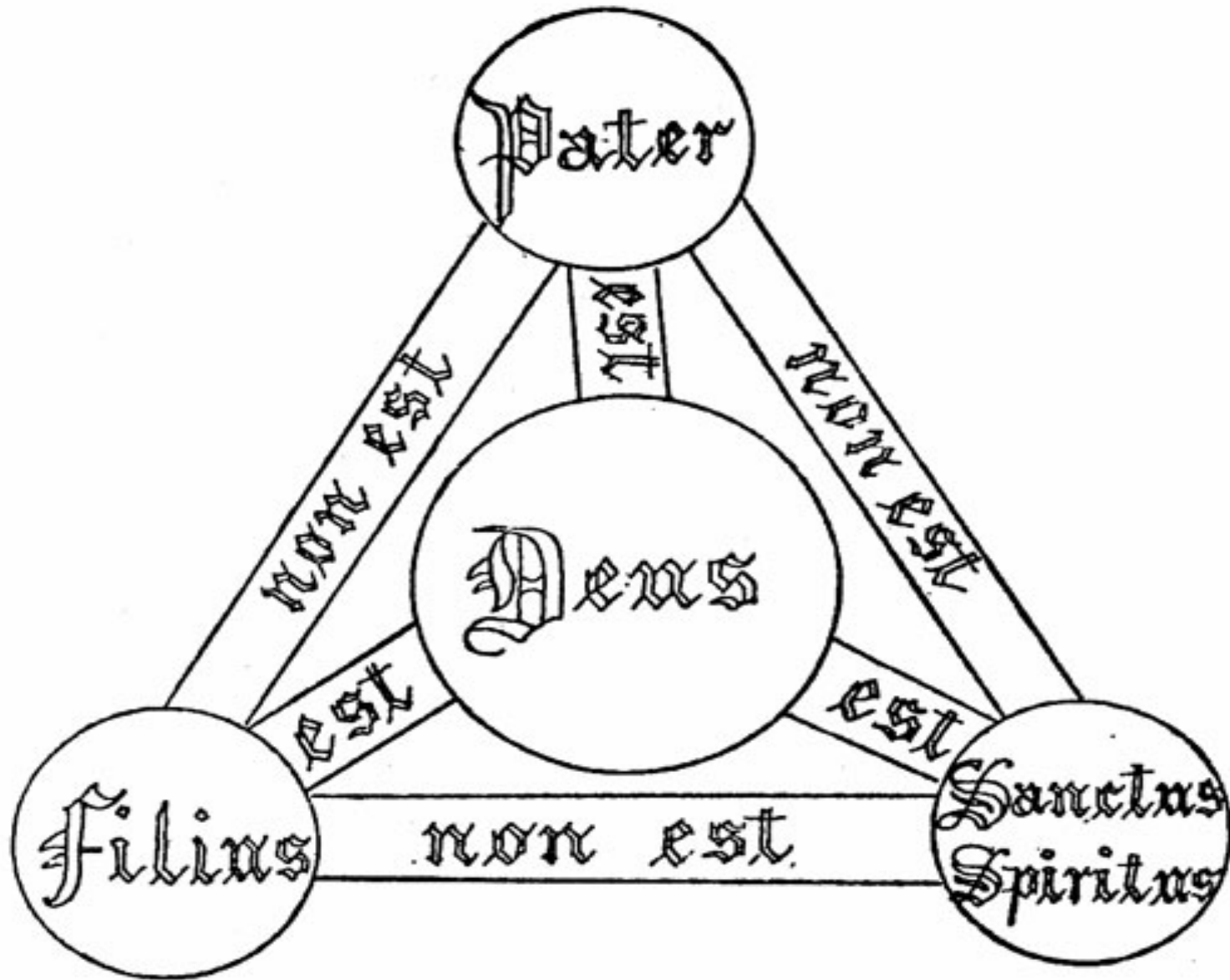
Three Key Figures

- Saint Athanasius (297-373), Saint Augustine (354-430), Saint Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274)
- Athanasius: Greatest opponent of Arius, powerful defender of Jesus' divinity and The Trinity, often called, "Father of Orthodoxy"
- Augustine: Wrote book; "On The Trinity", probably used for the "Athanasian Creed", St Jerome said Augustine, "established anew the ancient Faith"
- Aquinas: need faith and reason to know of God, defined The Trinity as we know it today, "ultimately – a mystery"

The Athanasian Creed (CCC 266)

“Now this is the Catholic Faith: We worship one God in the Trinity and the Trinity in unity, without either confusing the persons or dividing the substance; for the person of the Father is one, the Son’s is another, the Holy Spirit’s another; but the Godhead of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is one, their glory equal, their majesty coeternal.”

The Trinity



Thought to be from 1st Constantinople, 381 AD

The Bible Helps, but Doesn't Define Trinity

- **“In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.” – Jn 1: 1, 14**
- **“Amen, amen, I say to you, before Abraham came to be, I AM.” – Jn 8: 58**
- **“And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you always,,, he will teach you everything.” – Jn 14: 16, 26**
- **“Now glorify me, Father, with you, with the glory that I had with you before the world began.” – Jn 17: 5**

God Did This Out of Love for Us



**If you realize what The Trinity represents, you know
THIS IS GOD! – doing – what only God could do!!!**

The Trinity Helps Us Understand The Crucifixion

The crucifixion WAS NOT a cruel FATHER demanding the bloody sacrificial death of his only SON!

“God himself becomes the locus of reconciliation, and in the person of the Son takes the suffering upon himself. God himself grants his infinite purity to the world. God himself ‘drinks the cup’ of every horror to the dregs and thereby restores justice through the greatness of his love, which, through suffering, transforms the darkness.”

- Pope Benedict XVI, “Jesus of Nazareth, Holy Week”

“Whoever has seen me has seen the Father”

- Jn 14:9



**“It wasn't nails that held Jesus on the Cross,
it was LOVE.”** - St Catherine of Siena